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RELIGIOWEST

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join the ranks? An international comparison

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ReligioWest

ReligioWest is a four year research project funded by the European Research Council and based at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy. It aims at studying how different western states in Europe and North America are redefining their relationship to religions, under the challenge of an increasing religious activism in the public sphere, associated with new religious movements and with Islam.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the ‘strategic action field’ (Fligstein and McAdam 2013) evolving in five European countries (and the U.S.) around the inclusion of Muslims into military chaplaincy. The paper shows that cross-national institutional differences in particular with regard to the state-religion relationship have an influence on the accommodation of Muslims in military chaplaincy: countries with a strong focus on equality in their state-religion relationship are more advanced in setting up a Muslim military chaplaincy, whereas countries whose state-religion relationship explicitly allows for the differential treatment of religious groups lag behind, in particular if Muslims are among the groups for whom official cooperation with the state is impossible since they have not acquired the requested legal status. At the same time, the paper shows that organization-specific arguments that push for religious accommodation and equal treatment in the military lead to a convergence of practices across the different European countries. Similar things are ‘at stake’ in the strategic action field that evolves around the inclusion of Muslims into military chaplaincy: the distribution of scarce chaplaincy positions, training and education of chaplains, security and control of religion, attracting new recruits and assuring social cohesion as well as being in line with principles of equality and religious liberty. France stands out in this comparison because it reached a high level of Muslim accommodation in military chaplaincy that stands in stark contrast with the limited accommodation of religion reached in public schools. All European countries in the study differ fundamentally from the U.S. where the distribution of chaplaincy positions is organized along a relatively easy market-based system that does not depend on the European institutionalization of faith-specific military chaplaincies.

Keywords

Military chaplaincy, religious accommodation, Islam, organizational change

In Europe, the integration of large immigrant groups of Muslim faith has challenged host-country institutions (Rath, Groenendijk et al. 1991, Laurence 2012, Bowen, Bertossi et al. 2014, Burchardt and Michalowski 2015). Some public institutions, in particular schools, have been in the center of conceptual and ideological debates about how to re-negotiate the secular and the religious in the light of religious pluralization. In these public debates, the military has received relatively little attention which might have been different at times when the military was still perceived as a central force behind the reproduction of the nation state. Today, most European countries¹ have abolished or suspended conscription which is seen as a reason why the military has lost importance as a public institution that contributes to nation-building. In this process of becoming all-volunteer forces the military also had to redefine its bonds with society. While during times of conscription it was relatively easy to claim that the military was “representative of society” (though it never was given that women were not drafted and that alternative civilian service has long existed in liberal democracies) all-volunteer forces today feel pressurized to prove this representativeness. Restructuration creates many challenges for the armed forces in Europe that range from finding new recruits willing to engage in military operations abroad to maintaining social cohesion despite pluralization, not along the historically important lines of social class and regional belonging², but along categories such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background and religion that are of increasing importance for all public institutions in 21st century liberal democracies. From this perspective the military is a very typical public institution, yet one whose strategies towards the arrival of Muslims as a mostly new immigrant religious minority have received little attention in public and scientific debates. Studying the integration of Islam in the military also helps to avoid bias in scholarly and political reflection on challenges for public institutions that might arise from research and political debates too narrowly focused on always the same public institutions and accrediting a large importance to schools.

It is the aim of the present contribution to fill this void by focusing on the real, planned and/or discussed emergence of a Muslim military chaplaincy. Military chaplaincy is the central structure in the armed forces of most Western democracies when it comes to organizing and practicing religion. The creation of a new chaplaincy usually goes along with a detailed definition of religious rights for soldiers of that particular denomination and the military chaplains become internal ‘lobbyists’ for their religion. As such they not only provide religious and more general spiritual support to soldiers but they can also advise commanding officers in cases concerning their religion. Thus, military chaplains also take on the role of religious experts in the armed forces and they act as representatives for their religion in daily but also in highly official situations. Therefore having an own military chaplaincy means much more than ‘just’ having a spiritual leader for common prayer.

Three things should be noted, however, right away: first, the absence of a Muslim military chaplaincy does not imply the absence of any chaplaincy support for Muslims. In European countries that dispose of a Jewish military chaplaincy, Jewish chaplains have taken on the role of lobbyists for Muslims for example on issues of dietary requests. Jewish and Christian chaplains have also provided spiritual care to Muslim soldiers if they wished so. This spiritual care that is open to any soldier is not focused on religion but on personal or ethical problems that an individual soldier might face. From this perspective, which is certainly one of the most important chaplaincy tasks deontological- as well as time-wise, the provision of military chaplaincy services can be understood as a low-threshold counseling service. Second, even in countries where Muslims do dispose of an own military chaplaincy, other religious minorities are still excluded. Thus the question for which groups military chaplaincy should be opened is a permanent dilemma, at least under the European model where chaplaincy positions are never distributed uncoupled from a denomination-specific chaplaincy whose

¹ Exceptions are Austria, Switzerland as well as some Scandinavian and Baltic states.

² I thank Jochen Oltmer from the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) at the University of Osnabrück for pointing this out to me.

introduction requires important organizational change. Third, military chaplaincies cannot be created without the strong support of the minister and ministry of Defense but their absence is not the pure result of official refusal either. Many religious communities show no or little interest in having an own military chaplaincy. Muslim communities in Europe are currently striving for accommodation in many public institutions including the military but the military is not of prior concern.

This paper will provide some elements of analysis for what is at stake in collective strategic action evolving around the arrival of a new group in the field of military chaplaincy. It assumes that this collective strategic action does not take place in an empty space but that it is embedded in a specific national political opportunity structure shaped in particular by a country's relationship between state and religion. Even though actors in the strategic field are free and rational, the set of plausible and legitimate policy solutions is limited by this national political opportunity structure. Against this background, one can ask what influences cross-national institutional differences in terms of state-religion regimes have on the strategic action field evolving around the inclusion of Muslims into military chaplaincy?

Theorizing Collective Strategic Action and Cross-National Differences

Many authors have developed ideas about collective action based on rational choice theory and thus focusing on the competition over and the distribution of scarce resources (for many see: Crozier and Friedberg 1977, Schelling 1980, Friedberg 1993). They focus on the strategies that individual and collective actors employ to secure their access to particular resources and that are marked by cooperation and refusal to cooperate, general power relations and attempts to dominate the framing of a given situation. Most recently, Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2013) have published a book that summarizes ideas they developed on this topic over the past twenty years. Their unit of analysis is what they call the "strategic action field" which can roughly be described as a set of actors who know, monitor and react to each other with regard to the distribution of certain resources. Some social actors are more skilled than others in analyzing the field and "work to improve their position in an existing strategic action field or define their privilege" (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 7). In opposition to an "unorganized social space", a strategic action field is well-defined in the sense that it is relatively clear which collective actors do or do not operate in the field (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 5). However, fields are also "constructed on a situational basis, as shifting collections of actors come to define new issues and concerns as salient" (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 10). This implies that new action fields can emerge and others disappear.

As "mesolevel social orders" (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 3) strategic action fields can be relatively stable but stability is not natural. It is rather the result of "actors working very hard to reproduce their local social order". From this perspective, power relations are not set in stone but actors constantly have to make little adjustments in order to secure their dominant position. Thus some incremental change happens all the time, even under relatively stable social conditions (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 12). When organizational change happens, it is preceded by a change in dominant ideas. In fact, the members of a strategic action field share a certain set of understandings, which can be regrouped into four different categories: first, what is going on in the field or what is at stake, second, who are the actors in the field, how do they relate to each other and what power positions does each actor occupy, third, what are the "rules" in the field, i.e. what strategies are possible, legitimate, and interpretable for each of the roles in the field. Finally, there is the broad interpretive frame that individual and collective strategic actors bring to make sense of what others within the strategic action field are doing (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 10-11). By underlining that these shared understandings depend on the members of the field, Fligstein and McAdam point to the constructed nature of these understandings and oppose the otherwise often-used notion of "institutional logics" (Scott and Davis 2007) since it suggests a unity of interpretations that may simply not exist (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 10-11).

The actors in the field can be described as incumbents, challengers and governmental units. Incumbents have a large influence in a field and see their interests and views “heavily reflected in the dominant organization of the strategic action field” (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 10-11). Challengers occupy “less privileged niches within the field and ordinarily wield little influence over its operation. While they recognize the nature of the field and the dominant logic of incumbent actors, they can usually articulate an alternative vision of the field and their position in it” (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 10-11). Governance units are “charged with overseeing compliance with field rules and, in general, facilitating the overall smooth functioning and reproduction of the system. (...) It is important to note that virtually all such governance units bear the imprint of the influence of the most powerful incumbents in the field and the ideas that are used to justify their dominance” (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 13).

All strategic action fields are embedded in a broader field, the environment. There are distant and proximate fields, fields that show dependence, interdependence or independence from each other as well as state and nonstate fields. Exogenous shocks coming from this larger environment can lead to mobilization within a given strategic action field. In some cases, a true episode of contention can occur, followed by a new or refurbished institutional settlement (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 18-20).

The strategic action field studied in this paper is constituted around the question which religious groups may provide chaplains to the armed forces. Only a small number of actors operates in this field. Most prominent are the incumbents who are the powerful established military chaplaincies and their respective sending churches as well as the ministry of defense that is usually represented by a specific unit in charge of religious issues and military chaplaincy. The challengers are the weak established military chaplaincies as well as religious groups outside the military that wish to send military chaplains to the armed forces. In addition, there are military academies that deliver background knowledge on issues such as military chaplaincy, specific faith groups (e.g. Muslims), or the attitudes and the behavior of soldiers within the armed forces. They sometimes act as think tanks on the question how to introduce a new military chaplaincy. Some countries also dispose of specific units within the armed forces that are in charge of implementing diversity measures. For reasons of space, the present paper only looks at one central aspect of the strategic action field analysis proposed by Fligstein and McAdam (2013), namely at the question “what is going on in the field or what is at stake”. A detailed analysis of the other aspects (the actors and their power position, the “rules” of the field, and the broad interpretive frame actors bring to understand the field) will be provided elsewhere.

Country Differences

Yet, before studying in more detail what is at stake, focus will shift to a second theoretic approach that is dominant in migration research on the religious accommodation of Muslims, namely cross-national ideological differences with regard to state-religion relationship. In migration research it has often been argued, that state-religion relationship is decisive for the form of religious accommodation of Muslim immigrants and Islam encountered in each national context (for many see: Fetzer and Soper 2005). In Fligstein and McAdam’s theory (2013) these ideologies would most likely be reflected in the set of understandings that are shared by all actors regarding the rules in the field, i.e. what strategies are possible, legitimate and interpretable. The question then of course would be whether these national ideologies defining how the state-religion relationship should be organized prevail over the local social order as produced in the specific institutional context of the military?

The countries chosen for this study show cross-national institutional differences in terms of state-religion relationship: Three of the six countries under study follow an ideology of equal treatment for all religious groups. In the case of the Netherlands and the US this equal treatment principle translates into equal support by the state for religious groups that are allowed to manifest themselves in the public sphere. Jonathan Fox (2008) calls this accommodation. In the case of French *laïcité* the principle of equal treatment translates into equal restrictions on the expression and practice of faith in the public sphere for all groups. This is why Jonathan Fox (2008) classifies France as separationist.

The three other cases selected for this study follow an ideology of state-religion relationship that allows for the differential treatment of religious groups. Austria, Belgium and Germany all implement so-called models of cooperation between state and religion (Fox 2008: 108-109) where selected religious groups closely cooperate with the state on selected topics such as military chaplaincy. In the cases of Belgium and Austria, however, Islam is recognized as an official partner for the state since 1912 and 1974 respectively (Mattes and Rosenberger 2015, Torrekens 2015). In Germany, this official recognition of a Muslim body as a corporation under public law is still pending. Thus in both types of regimes, namely those focused on equal treatment and those officially allowing for differential treatment different sub-types of regimes have been chosen to allow for further contrasting and theory-building. Not part of this case selection are models of state-religion relationship that Jonathan Fox (2008: 108-109) calls “one official religion” (e.g. Norway as well as until recently Denmark and Sweden), “multiple official religions” (e.g. Finland, UK) and “civil religion” (Ireland, Portugal, Spain).

State of the Art

The literature on the accommodation of religious pluralism in the field of military chaplaincy is very scarce. There is a growing but still small body of literature that focuses on strategies pursued by public institutions other than the military regarding religious pluralism (Khosrokhavar 2004, Beckford, Joly et al. 2005, Thériault 2009, Becci 2011, Gauthier 2011, Stoeckl and Roy forthcoming 2015). Many of these studies focus on prisons and they find that prisons are often willing to accommodate religion since religion is deemed to be functional for the re-socialization of prisoners. In the case of Muslim inmates, the control of religion has however become a major concern and prison authorities have developed different strategies how to check for undesired forms of religious fundamentalism (Stoeckl and Roy forthcoming 2015).

Some studies, all them ordered or supported by the respective armed forces, have studied the situation of individual Muslim soldiers in the military (Baumgarten and Gober 2002, Bosman 2008, Settoul 2008, Menke and Tomforde 2010, Menke and Langer 2011, Krainz 2012, Sandhoff 2013). These studies usually point to persisting forms of discrimination, deliver individual accounts of integration into the military and identify structural hurdles. Particularly interesting in this regard is the study by Bertossi and Wihtol de Wenden (2007) on the situation of French Muslim soldiers because it was initially commissioned by the French Armed Forces and then served as a catalyst for the introduction of a Muslim military chaplaincy. Ron E. Hassner’s edited volume (2014) takes a slightly different approach by analyzing how in armed forces worldwide religion and the dominance of certain groups affect “military operations and the conduct of war” (Hassner 2014: 10), without, however, paying special attention to the accommodation of religious minorities. Two additional edited volumes largely focus on policies that govern ethnic and religious diversity in the military (Soeters and van der Meulen 2007, Kümmel 2012) but they do not provide a systematic comparative analysis of religious accommodation.

Military academies and the military chaplaincies themselves have produced publications on military chaplaincy and the relationship between the state and the church in general as well as on specific aspects of this cooperation such as the role of chaplains in peace processes (Dörfler-Dierken 2008) or in international operations (Barker and Werkner 2008). In the 1990s Martin Bock has produced an international comparison of military chaplaincy that is largely descriptive and focuses on structural components of military chaplaincy such as the financing and the management within the military structure (Bock 1992, 1994, 1998). In addition, there are a few single-case studies on military chaplaincy such as a comparison by Inger Furseth’s (2003) on the role of Muslim religion in the military and prisons in Norway and by Andrew Todd on the role of Muslim chaplaincy in prisons and the military in the United Kingdom (Todd 2015). Finally, closest to this study probably are the study on chaplains and religious diversity in the US military by Kim Hansen (2012) and the extended analysis by Christophe Bertossi on the case of the French military (Bertossi 2014). While Bertossi looks at the institutional reframing of republican integration by the French military, Hansen explicitly

studies how military chaplains deal with religious diversity and how different understandings of what the role of chaplains in the U.S. military should be are negotiated. Both studies, however, focus on one single country. Thus, as it seems there is no systematic cross-national comparison including more than two cases of how the military accommodates religious diversity and as far as I can tell also no other cross-national comparison of another public institution including more than two cases. This is an important gap in the existing literature because theories of cross-national differences in accommodation (for many see: Fetzer and Soper 2005) largely ignore the idea of institution-specific opportunity structures for religious accommodation. The recently published edited volume by John Bowen et al. (2014) is an important exception. This book focuses on the idea of organizational differences and specificities in Muslims' religious accommodation but it loses out of sight (or rather outright rejects) the idea that cross-national differences most importantly in state-religion relationship influence the way in which national public institutions accommodate religion (Bowen, Bertossi et al. 2014: 9-12). It is the aspiration of the present research to combine theories on cross-national differences with theories from the sociology of organizations.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The findings result from a qualitative comparative research based on semi-structured interviews with religious experts in the armed forces of different Western European countries and the United States. The structure of the interview is roughly as follows: 1) How is your chaplaincy organized? 2) How is religion accommodated in your armed forces? 3) Were there any conflicts about religious accommodation or the setup of a new chaplaincy? 4) How does the situation in your armed forces compare to the situation in other countries and in other institutions within your country? My sample of interviewees is not representative of either a particular religious group, of the entire chaplains' corps or the armed forces under study. I interviewed experts who in many cases are chiefs of chaplains. They have an exposed position within their organization and are particularly knowledgeable regarding the question of religion in the military. Since this knowledge is only published to a very small extent, the interviews allow me to identify organizational logics and strategies in response to religious diversity as well as arguments supporting these strategies. I pay special attention to the influence of the respective national environment on these strategies. The study is idiographic because it "seeks to fully describe a single artifact or case from a phenomenological perspective and to connect the unique aspects of the case with more general truths or principles" (Neuendorf 2002: 11). It relies on 46 formal interviews in German, French and Dutch language (based on full transcripts of written records taken during the interviews), 10 informal discussions (documented only via short notes on recollections from memory after the discussion) and written records on the participation in three conferences that gathered scientists and practitioners (i.e. military chaplains). In addition, I did extensive internet research mainly on military or military chaplaincy related websites, on government and parliament websites and in the media. I also consulted the publications that were produced by the different military chaplaincies and given to me during interviews. All interview reports and internet sources providing information not mentioned by the interviews were coded with a theoretically-derived and empirically confirmed coding scheme (Mayring 2008, Gläser and Laudel 2009) using Atlas.ti. This coding scheme brought to the fore the five different issues of 'what is at stake' in military chaplaincy when Muslims join the ranks presented below.

Findings on the Organization of Military Chaplaincy

The existence of military chaplaincy is not a natural given but a religious accommodation that many secular states worldwide provide (Hassner 2014). This accommodation is contested by pacifists who are either inspired by (Christian) religious principles of non-violence, thereby condemning all forms of institutional cooperation between the military and the church, or by political leftist ideologies directed

against the military and oftentimes against religion.³ Particularly claims in favor of a total separation of the church and the military that are voiced from within the Christian churches show that the established churches have come to an arrangement with worldly principles that may contradict some of the core religious principles such as non-violence.⁴ In the interviews, military chaplains usually underlined that they do not bear arms, that they have one foot in the military but also one foot outside and that their motivation is not to win a war and sustain the military power of their country but to provide spiritual assistance to individuals who unarguably face dire conditions and are thus in need of help. By pointing this out, chaplains present themselves as having no stake in the military core business and in power structures that support it. For the protestant church in Germany, Ines-Jacqueline Werkner however noticed that state-financed chaplaincy positions and social influence in a public institution motivated the protestant church of East Germany to accept the introduction of a military chaplaincy even though its congregation opposed the adoption of the West German model of military chaplaincy after reunification (Werkner 2004: 30-31).

In Europe, the United States of America and other countries with Christian majorities, chaplaincies were first granted to Christians. Then, in particular during times of war and colonial empire, Jewish and Muslim chaplains were allowed or invited to join the military (Hank, Simon et al. 2013, Heidborn 2014). After World War II Western European countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands fell back on all-Christian military chaplaincies. The following section presents how these all-Christian chaplaincies opened up to other faith groups, describing pair-wise the current situation in the different countries and then contrasting these findings for Europe against the situation in the United States.

A Chaplaincy for Jews, a Chaplaincy for Muslims: France and the Netherlands

France and the Netherlands are two countries that similarly defend the idea of equal treatment of all religious groups, but these two countries formally diverge with regard to ideas about how this equal treatment should be achieved. Whereas the Netherlands provide equal support for all groups (classified by Jonathan Fox 2008 as accommodation), France equally rejects support for all groups (classified by Jonathan Fox 2008 as separationist). When it comes to military chaplaincy, however, France and the Netherlands both turn out to be particularly accommodative to religion, though in a slightly different sense. Among all of Europe's armed forces the Netherlands are the country with the highest number of non-Christian religious groups established as full military chaplaincies.⁵ In fact, next to the Catholic and the Protestant chaplaincies, there is a Humanist, a Jewish, a Muslim and a Hindu chaplaincy in the Netherlands. Yet, most of the 151 chaplain positions are distributed among what is called in the Dutch military the three "big services": the Catholic chaplaincy holds 55 positions, the Protestant chaplaincy 52 and the Humanist chaplaincy 38 positions. The so-called "small services" only dispose of two chaplains each, i.e. there are two Jewish, two Muslim and two Hindu chaplains to the Dutch armed forces.

France also holds a special position in Europe. Even though the total number of religious groups represented in military chaplaincy is smaller than in the Netherlands – namely four of which two are Christian – France has attributed the highest share in terms of total chaplaincy positions available to Muslims as an (immigrant) religious minority. Of the 228 full-time chaplaincy positions, 139 are granted to the Catholic military chaplaincy, 34 to the Protestant, 17 to the Jewish, and 38 to the

³ See e.g., <http://globnetabolishmilitarychaplaincy.webnode.com> as well as <http://www.ibka.org/artikel/militaer.html>

⁴ For example the Confessio Augustana from 1530 that is still considered a fundament of the Lutheran Church in its article 16 not only explicitly allows Christians to become soldiers but also condemns those contesting this.

⁵ The UK accommodates more groups, yet these are - except for the Jewish chaplaincy - all Christian groups namely: Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Elim or Assemblies of God. The four so-called "world faith chaplains" (Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist) are civilians, not full military chaplains.

Muslim military chaplaincy, i.e. Muslim chaplains make up for almost 17% of all chaplains to the French armed forces.

France and the Netherlands are also two of the only four European countries that dispose of a Jewish Military Chaplaincy (the two others are Hungary and the United Kingdom). In France, this chaplaincy has existed since the 19th century and was re-established quickly after World War II. In the Netherlands, a Jewish Chaplaincy had existed in British exile (*Prinses Irene Brigade*) during World War II and was fully established within the Dutch Armed Forces in 1967. In the interviews, both the Dutch and the French Jewish Chief of Chaplains stated that they assisted Muslim soldiers for example with dietary requests before the arrival of the Muslim chaplaincy and that they supported the arrival of a Muslim military chaplaincy.⁶ This suggests that Jewish military chaplaincies have acted as internal lobbyists for Muslims (on this notion see: Dobbin, Kim et al. 2011).

For the Netherlands it should be noted that despite the pre-existence of a Jewish and a Hindu (created in 2003) military chaplaincy the staffing decision concerning the Muslim military chaplaincy was difficult. After an initial decision to create such a chaplaincy had been taken in 2007, the two Muslim representative bodies in the Netherlands spent several years discussing who should have the authority to endorse military chaplains (Hilali 2007). After the CMO (*Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid*) had proven to be a more reliable partner even in simple communication with the Ministry of Defense, the government one-sidedly opted for the CMO as a partner for further negotiations (Hilali 2007). However, after this was set and after the Ministry of Defense had opted for two candidates as Muslim chaplains to the Dutch Armed Forces the minister of Defense had to justify his choice of a candidate deemed too orthodox in his religion and not loyal enough in his attachment to the Netherlands by some conservative right parties. In France, apparently no comparable discussions took place. On the one hand, the ministerial directive from 2005 on the organization of military chaplaincy lowered the required level of education for military chaplains from what used to be “bac +5” (i.e. high school diploma plus 5 years of university education) to a simple high school diploma. On the other hand, all candidates for Muslim military chaplaincy were obliged to participate in a *laïcité* training provided by the *Institut Catholique*, a catholic institute of higher education that was initially the only university to have accepted this teaching assignment wanted by the French government.

A Muslim Chaplaincy Planned but not Enacted: Belgium and Austria

Belgium and Austria face a similar situation: in both countries, cooperation between the state and selected religious communities allows for differential treatment of religious groups. Also in both countries Islam acquired the position of a corporation under public law which entails public recognition as a partner for cooperation with the state in different fields, including military chaplaincy. As a consequence, the armed forces of both countries have planned to set up a Muslim military chaplaincy. The Austrian military budget entails two Muslim chaplaincy positions since 2008 (also cf. Krainz in this issue). In Belgium, one full Muslim chaplaincy position is waiting to be staffed. Thus, even though Islam has been recognized in Belgium for almost 40 years and in Austria for over 100 years, the staffing of these chaplaincy positions turns out to be difficult. In addition, at least in the Austrian case, it seems that an initial attempt was made by the Ministry of Defense in 2008 to staff these two positions. Interviewees from the Austrian ministry of Defense and the different existing military chaplaincies mentioned that the representative body for Islam in Austria (IGGIÖ) under its previous board⁷ presented two “unsuitable” candidates that had to be rejected by the Ministry of Defense. Other interviewees also pointed out that the Ministry of Defense was not particularly

⁶ At a conference in Paris in October 2012, also a Jewish chaplain from the British Armed Forces voiced concern over the differential treatment that Muslims and other so-called “world faith groups” received in the British Armed Forces due to their status as civilians.

⁷ Elections were held in 2011.

interested in having a Muslim military chaplaincy. One reason might be that the initial concentration of all self-declared orthodox (*strenggläubig*) Muslim recruits of to the Austrian military in the *Maria-Theresien* barrack in Vienna was waved stepwise in the years between 2005 and 2011. The reason for this was the introduction of a new and cheaper central cooking method (*cook and chill*) that allowed for the provision of multicomponent meals and thus meals without pork in barracks all over Austria. Previously, all self-declared orthodox Muslims were located in the Viennese *Maria-Theresien* barrack since this was the only location in Austria where pork-free meals were cooked. During the high times of Muslim concentration in the Vienna barrack, one civilian employee at that barrack took the initiative to create a Muslim prayer room on the barrack premises that could host up to sixty military and civilian employees for Friday prayers. Even an office was created for the first Muslim chaplain who was expected to arrive in 2008. The employee who initiated this prayer room collected individual donations and was in relatively close contact with the powerful Catholic military chaplaincy that donated the loudspeakers for the call to prayer. This civilian employee was unable to fill the position himself since he did not meet the educational requirements for chaplains in the Austrian military. After the concentration of orthodox Muslims in the Vienna barrack ended, the prayer room lost its importance, the civilian employee who had created it was relocated to another military site and the office for the first chaplain remained empty. Six years after the planned start of a Muslim chaplaincy, negotiations about how to staff the two positions are still ongoing. When the staffing of the positions failed in 2008, it was decided that more energy should be placed on the arrival of an orthodox military chaplain. And indeed, in 2012, an Orthodox chaplain started to work on a civilian contractual basis for the Austrian military, next to 22 catholic and 7 protestant chaplains.

In Belgium the delayed arrival of a Muslim military chaplaincy fits into the overall picture of a relatively weak military chaplaincy. In contrast to other countries where military chaplaincies are well-identifiable units in the military that dispose for example of their own websites, the military chaplaincy in Belgium is integrated into the service of well-being, thus working alongside social workers and psychologists. Since the arrival of the Humanist military chaplaincy in 1998, the Protestant military chaplaincy has lost its power and positions. From some 7 military chaplain positions, it is down to only one military chaplain position in 2014 while the Humanists hold 8 military chaplain positions next to the Catholics with 14 positions. Initially, the Jewish faith community also disposed of one military chaplain positions but the rabbi in charge of it slowly started to provide this service part-time since it was very difficult to keep up an entire chaplaincy with only one chaplain. The Protestants, who in early 2013 still disposed of three chaplaincy positions are obliged to hand in two positions by 2015 and are afraid to face the same fate as the Jewish chaplaincy. Yet while the Jewish position is vacant, the Muslim chaplaincy disposes of a secretariat that is currently staffed part-time by a veteran. As in Austria, the Ministry of Defense argues that the Muslim Executive of Belgium (see Torrekens 2015) is not able to agree on a candidate deemed “suitable” by the Ministry of Defense. Thus, negotiations over staffing are slow.

Multiple Obstacles on the Way to Accommodation: Germany

Germany differs from the two previously mentioned cases in that Muslims have not yet acquired the status of a corporation under public law. This implies explicit differential treatment in a system not precluding it. As a consequence, it may not come as a surprise that in Germany military chaplaincy is reserved to the Catholic and the Protestant churches only. The Protestant military chaplaincy is slightly bigger, holding 90 positions compared to 75 Catholic positions. According to interviewees in both chaplaincies, this distribution was decided unanimously among the two military chaplaincies because the Protestant chaplaincy has traditionally been slightly bigger than the Catholic one and because the Catholic church is running short of priests, including potential candidates for military chaplaincy. One Muslim organization (*Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland*) claims Muslim military chaplains but it is not recognized as the only official representative body and thus has no public mandate to take this issue further. It is noteworthy, though, that in March 2014, the German

Islam Conference (DIK) has opted for chaplaincy as one of the two central topics for its new round of negotiations. Since the DIK has proven to be an influential mechanism for the religious accommodation of Muslims, one can expect that the call for “visible progress in the spiritual care of soldiers of Muslim faith in the German military” will be met when negotiations start on this topic in 2015. Also within the German military, different scenarios for creating a Muslim military chaplaincy have been developed. It thus seems that what Fligstein and McAdam call a stable, two-groups field in which the main actors are able to reproduce themselves and the field over a fairly long period of time (Fligstein and McAdam 2013: 9) has come to be effectively contested. Interestingly, though, the effectiveness of this contestation can only partially be attributed to mobilization. In fact, the Humanist Union of Germany (HVD) has been far more mobilized for getting its own military chaplaincy than the Central Council of Muslims German (ZMD). However, the Humanists have been less successful than the Muslims so far. This suggests that other actors supported a Muslim but not a Humanist military chaplaincy in Germany. From what the interviews reveal, these actors seem to be located in the larger environment of the established Christian military chaplaincies that maintain close links with the military academy and the Center for Leadership Development and Civic Education (*Zentrum Innere Führung*) that is part of the Ministry of Defense.

Chaplains without a Chaplaincy: the United States

To close the intra-European comparison, a brief look at the organization of military chaplaincy in the United States is helpful to understand one central commonality behind all European cases. In the United States Armed Forces military chaplains are hierarchically organized within the five service branches but not according to their faith group. This means, that no faith-specific military chaplaincy exists even though among the over 2000 chaplains in the U.S. military, there are also Catholic, Muslim and a myriad of different Protestant chaplains. A religious group that seeks to send chaplains to the U.S. military needs to dispose of an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax exempt status for churches and religious organizations in order to register with the Department of Defense as a so-called “endorsing agency”. When a chaplaincy position opens, a chaplaincy candidate from any of the currently close to 200 registered “endorsing agencies” – among them two Muslim and eleven Catholic churches – can apply for this position. He or she needs the endorsement of the endorsing agency and has to meet the military requirements posed by the Department of Defense before starting a career in one of the five service branches. In the interviews, the European chaplains often rejected the US American model of military chaplaincy, expressing some disbelief about the validity of such a non-denominational organization, in particular since US chaplains are supposed to provide the framework necessary for the religious practice of any religious group. The flexibility of the US system of military chaplaincy is of great advantage for smaller groups since contrary to Europe no profound organizational change is needed for their integration. Other than in Europe, no existing chaplaincy positions have to be re-distributed in order for a new military chaplaincy to be set up. Still, this does not imply either that religious minorities encounter no difficulties in the US.⁸ In fact, some of these difficulties arise from this more market-based system since fundamentalist Evangelical Christians have managed to become dominant in some parts of the U.S. military and its chaplaincy because of strong and effective group mobilization.⁹

⁸ For the experience of a Muslim chaplain at Guantanamo Bay who was subject of intense investigation see Yee, J. (2005). *For God and Country. Faith and Patriotism under Fire*. New York, Public Affairs. For the experience of a Pentecostal military chaplain who converted to Wicca religion see www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/18/AR2007021801396.html. For a Humanist who wants to become a Navy chaplain see <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/aug/17/nation/la-na-humanist-chaplain-20130818>

⁹ See e.g., www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/10/AR2006121000883.html as well as http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Air_Force_Academy#Religious_atmosphere

In sum, this section has shown that in Europe, existing strategic action fields have been challenged by the increasing societal inclusion of Muslims. In France and the Netherlands, this has resulted in important organizational changes, namely the creation of a new Muslim military chaplaincy. In Austria and Belgium some change has taken place but since the Muslim chaplain positions have not been staffed and since in Belgium important restructuration of the entire military chaplaincy is taking place, the strategic action field is still in movement. In Germany, a hitherto stable action field that was dominated by only two incumbents is increasingly contested and on the verge of changing. This contestation and change that has already occurred in some cases gives a good insight into what is at stake in the strategic action field of military chaplaincy when Muslims join the ranks.

Analysis: What is at stake?

As previously mentioned the analysis will focus on only one aspect of Fligstein and McAdam's *Theory of Fields*, namely on the question what is at stake in a particular strategic action field. Five points can be highlighted:

Chaplaincy Positions – the Redistribution of Scarce Resources

Depending on the size of the armed forces, the military chaplaincy of all faith groups confounded can comprise only some 20 military chaplain positions as in Belgium or over 200 positions as in France or even over 2000 positions as in the United States. Yet, in all cases, military chaplain positions are a scarce resource. In the United States, these chaplaincy positions are distributed through the above-mentioned market based system while in the European countries studied here, the distribution of chaplaincy positions is pre-negotiated between the state and the religious groups that are officially allowed to partake in this negotiation. Each religious group officially recognized as a partner in providing military chaplains thus disposes of a fixed number of chaplaincy positions. These are not constantly re-negotiated but often remain in place for many years or even several decades in a row. Changes in the attribution of chaplaincy positions have occurred mainly through a restructuring of the armed forces (e.g. after the end of conscription) or through the arrival of new groups. Continuous adaption of the distribution of chaplaincy positions to the country's or the armed forces' religious demography or to the demand voiced by soldiers is not foreseen. None of the European armed forces under study collects official religious statistics on a regular basis and mismatches evidenced by punctual statistics are easily ignored. Under these circumstances, skilled negotiators are likely to obtain more chaplaincy positions. In some countries, the Muslim representatives have claimed a comparatively high number of chaplaincy positions before the chaplaincy was set up but their outsider claims were simply dismissed as unrealistic.

Training and Education of Chaplains

Individuals wishing to be employed as military chaplains have to meet certain criteria that are defined by their religious group and by the military. While the military sets certain age, security, fitness and general educational standards, the respective religious groups often have more precise requirements in terms of theological training or practical experience in the civilian world before joining the military. Even though precise requirements differ across the countries, the established Christian churches who are insiders to the military chaplaincy usually support the idea that several a master degree in higher education is necessary to become a chaplain and that newcomer religions should also fulfill this requirement to be able to speak with chaplains of other faith groups on an equal footing. These educational standards are thus part of what in particular the Christian and the Jewish incumbents defend. These high educational standards can be a hurdle for new and still small immigrant religious minorities not only in Europe but also in the United States since the first highly educated immigrants from those groups often seek more prestigious or better remunerated positions in the labor market (e.g.

in engineering or medicine) while religious studies for becoming a military chaplain are of little interest. Among the countries studied only France has decided to lower the educational requirements for military chaplains from university education to a simple high school diploma. This allowed for the broad recruitment of chaplains among a pool of soldiers who were already engaged in the French military and for whom no questions of alliance arose.

Security and Control of Religion

In the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria debates about who would be apt to fill the first chaplain position of a newly created Muslim military chaplaincy proved to be lengthy. Discussions about whether candidates adhere to the principles of democracy and whether they stand for a too orthodox interpretation of Islam show that in particular the Ministry of Defense is concerned about its ability to control religion and ostracize fundamentalists. This control, however, is not done through any theological debates but largely focuses on anecdotal evidence. For example, the Dutch candidate for becoming the Muslim military chaplain had previously criticized the Dutch Prime Minister, voiced criticism about the mission in Afghanistan and signaled understanding for Muslim men refusing to shake hands with women, which then caused criticism about his loyalty to the Netherlands and his interpretation of Islam. The actual capacity of such anecdotal evidence to distinguish “good from bad” chaplains is questionable and in the case of the Dutch Muslim military chaplain, the Minister of Defense succeeded in convincing the Dutch Parliament of the candidate’s ability to act as a military chaplain. It should also be noted that Muslims are not the only religious group that experiences control. Among the manifold Protestant churches some are excluded from participation in military chaplaincy. In Europe, this exclusion mainly stems from the established protestant churches that can decide who becomes a member of the state-recognized Protestant representative body. In Germany, for example, only the 20 Lutheran, Reformed and United Protestant churches that are part of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) can send chaplains to the military. As a consequence, evangelical churches are per se excluded from military chaplaincy in Germany. This is different in France and Belgium where evangelical churches have been admitted to military chaplaincy. In France, new churches can join the Protestant Federation of France that is the official representative body of Protestants in France but not all churches who wish to become a member are actually included. In addition, the non-religious Humanists have been kept out of the system of military chaplaincy in all European countries and the United States except for the Netherlands and Belgium. In sum, the control of who comes in is a concern shared by the established churches and by the Ministry of Defense because those who are inside have of course a bigger chance to change things. It should be mentioned that some groups such as Jehovah’s witnesses do not wish to send chaplains to the military in particular because they want to avoid this kind of government control.

Attracting new recruits and assuring social cohesion

Austria is one of the few European countries to still have conscription. The armed forces of all other countries in this study are all-volunteer forces and thus heavily rely on new recruitment. Women and ethnic minorities are important target groups (for many see: Apt 2009). From this perspective, the accommodation of Muslims can also be understood as a strategy to secure not only recruitment of ethnic minorities, many of which are Muslims, but also to retain those who have found their way into the armed forces (Reding, Bassford et al. 2012). Self-selection of course is an important mechanism at work and as a consequence, Muslims who serve in all-volunteer forces rarely are particularly observant. Nonetheless, even for so-called “cultural Muslims” the existence of a Muslim military chaplaincy that acts as an advocacy group for Muslims within the military is of great symbolic value since it not only assures that religious practice is possible but also speaks out against any discriminatory practice that might impact the life of Muslim service members.

Being in line with principles of equality and religious liberty

Finally the organization of a Muslim military chaplaincy is also a matter of respecting principles that are cherished in all liberal democracies such as equality and religious liberty. From this perspective, setting up a Muslim military chaplaincy is a way for the military to show that as an organization it is in line with expectations about how 21st century liberal democracies should act with regard to diversity. This is a particularly important strategic aspect for all-volunteer forces that often feel criticized for being too detached from society. Thus, by creating Muslim military chaplaincies, the armed forces in Europe not only speak to possible recruits of Muslim belief but also send out a strong political and symbolic message to the rest of society.

National Differences vs. Organizational Commonalities

The present contribution has shown that the organization of military chaplaincy and its opening for Muslims responds to two different logics: (1) nation-specific logics that can push the armed forces in Europe towards divergence (in cases where these logics differ) and (2) organization-specific logics that can push them towards a convergence of practices in the field of religious accommodation.

(1) The comparison has identified a number of differences in the outcomes of religious accommodation across the selected European countries and the United States of America. These cross-national differences in religious accommodation are in line with the cross-national differences in state-religion relationship. The equality-oriented models of France and the Netherlands that are similar in goal but different in approach have both lead to the establishment of a military chaplaincy for Muslims. Austria, Belgium and Germany that allow for the differential treatment of religious groups, however, have not established a Muslim military chaplaincy. Two of these selective cooperation models (Austria and Belgium) have granted official recognition to Islam and, as a consequence, they are more advanced in establishing a Muslim chaplaincy than Germany where Islam is not yet recognized as an official partner for the state. On a broader scale, the organization of European military chaplaincy differs profoundly from the organization of American military chaplaincy where the distribution of chaplaincy positions is organized along a relatively simple market-based system that plays out favorably for Muslims and other religious minorities who wish to send chaplains to the armed forces. These differences in military chaplaincy organization also have an influence on “what is at stake” in the different strategic action fields. In Europe, the distribution of chaplaincy positions across denominations is of central importance whereas this is a non-issue in the United States. Within Europe, France stands out because it let go the requirement of university education for military chaplains, thereby assuring the recruitment of some 40 chaplains of Muslim faith, partially from a pool of soldiers already engaged in the French Armed Forces. Also, there were no public debates in France about whether individual candidates were “in line” with principles of democracy and laicism. Apparently the French armed forces were confident that they have at their disposal a sufficiently large pool of Muslims who fully endorse the principles of the French Republic. The Austrian strategic action field differs from the one of other countries because the persistence of conscription greatly reduces the need to attract new recruits. However there is also a pressure for religious accommodation namely because the state obliges conscripts to serve in the military.

(2) Other than that, similar issues seem to be at stake in the strategic action fields constituted in the different European countries around the inclusion of Muslim military chaplains. The distribution of chaplaincy position, training and education of chaplains, security and control of religion, attracting new recruits and assuring social cohesion as well as being in line with principles of equality and religious liberty all are issues “at stake” in most of the countries. Also, with regard to outcomes in accommodation, striking cross-national similarities can be observed – even across countries that are marked by differences in state-religion relationship such as France and the Netherlands. As was explained before, both countries dispose of a state-religion relationship that is strongly committed to the idea of equality and equal treatment. Ways how to achieve equality, however, differ: while the

Dutch system grants equal support to all religious groups, the French system denies any preferential treatment by the state to any religious group. According to the French ideal, the state establishes equality among individuals regardless of group membership whereas according to the Dutch ideal of religious governance, the state establishes equality among different groups. These differences play out very clearly in many public institutions, most prominently in schools. The French Armed Forces seem to adopt a strategy of “*laïcité positive*”, closer in a sense to the religion-friendly accommodative but still neutral attitude of the US American state. How is this deviation from the national ideology of strict separation between state and church possible?

I argue that institution-specific opportunity structures account for these cross-national commonalities. In particular the argument that a strict separation between the public and the private sphere – one basic principle of the French *laïcité* model – is impossible for soldiers, right along the lines of Goffman’s (1961) ideas on total institutions, provides strong support for making an exception in the military. This, however, assumes that military decision-makers have an interest in accommodating religion. At least three arguments may explain as to why this could be the case: first the practice of religion might help those who believe to cope with great uncertainty such as produced by fighting at war. Critics of military chaplaincy criticize that chaplains make soldiers “fit for war”. They argue that even though military chaplains in Western Europe stopped blessing weapons, their mere presence on sites of military operations contributes to the legitimization of military action and may help individual soldiers to make sense of their action. Closely linked to this argument is a second one, pointing to the fact that military chaplaincy has a long tradition in many European armed forces as well as in the U.S. From this perspective, the accommodation of Muslims allows to demonstrate that similar treatment is provided by the armed forces. This helps to strengthen the institution since it reaffirms a military core principle of equal treatment. Finally, the need of all-volunteer forces to identify new recruitment potentials also pushes armed forces in Europe towards the integration of Islam since accommodation is thought to send out a signal of openness and equal opportunities. This organization-specific interest in accommodating religion has contributed to the more or less advanced openings of military chaplaincies for Muslims. In all European countries under study, the former balance of powers has been effectively contested. Countries that do not yet dispose of a Muslim military chaplaincy either already planned the positions or discuss their introduction. In all cases studied here, Muslims are perceived to be a group with legitimate claims on military chaplaincy. And for reasons that are also intrinsic to the military institution, Muslims have made their way onto the agenda of Defense policy makers.

These findings on religious accommodation in the military allow formulating the hypotheses that institution-specific opportunity structures for religious accommodation are shaped by national political opportunity structures such as the state-religion relationship. If, however, strong institution-specific pressures for a certain type of accommodation of religion exist and if the arguments formulated in favor of such accommodation can still appeal to at least some elements of the national ideology (for example the French armed forces still refer to equality as a principle), then institution-specific forms of religious accommodation can differ from nation-specific approaches to accommodation as they are implemented by other public institutions. These hypotheses need to be tested against a larger sample of cases for verification.

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